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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 695

By Miller J

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Ms. Richelle Wilkerson
upon receiving the Girl Scout Gold Award.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those persons who, through their noble efforts, have distinguished themselves as young citizens and public servants of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, at a time when the youth of our country face tremendous challenges, the Girl Scouts of America is one of this nation's greatest assets, providing girls and young women with an educational program geared toward cultivating values, social conscience, and self-esteem, while also teaching them critical life skills that will enable them to succeed as adults; and

WHEREAS, Richelle Wilkerson, a Girl Scout from Lenoir City, is most assuredly deserving of special recognition; and

WHEREAS, eighteen-year-old Richelle Wilkerson is the recipient of the highest award in Girl Scouting, the Girl Scout Gold Award, which is awarded to less than one percent of all the Girl Scouts annually; and

WHEREAS, the requirements for this prestigious and coveted award take an average of two years to complete; the Senior Girl Scout must use all that she has learned in her previous Girl Scouting experience as she combines her leadership skills, career interests, and personal values to meet an expressed need in her community, and puts Girl Scout values into action; and

WHEREAS, for her Girl Scout Gold Award project, Richelle drew upon her expertise in computers to create a computer program to improve children's language skills using IntelliKeys—a computer system that provides physical, visual and cognitive access for people with a wide range of disabilities and allows instructors to individualize lessons based on the physical and cognitive development of the user; and

WHEREAS, after designing and constructing the customized keyboard for the Intellikeys system and designing the layout that appears on the screen, Richelle taught the autistic and developmentally-delayed children at Lenoir City Elementary School's Developmental Pre-School and their teachers how to use the system. Within a few weeks, the children were able to work independently with the overlay, eye-hand coordination skills were enhanced, and the autistic children's attention spans were improved; and

WHEREAS, Richelle Wilkerson epitomizes the spirit and commitment that is characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her hard work and tireless efforts, Richelle and the eleven other Girl Scout Gold Award recipients were honored with a special celebration in Washington, D.C. on March 4-7, 2000; and

WHEREAS, during the four-day tribute, these twelve exceptional young women met with government, business, and community leaders, took part in leadership development workshops, and visited important landmarks in the nation's capital; and

WHEREAS, the young women also participated in a panel discussion, "Trailblazing Women," at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The program was moderated

by NBC News journalist, Katie Couric, and included a diverse group of exemplary women, including Mary Tyler Moore and Gloria Steinem; and

WHEREAS, the highlight of the celebration was an award luncheon at the National Press Club on March 7, 2000 with Donna Shalala, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, serving as the keynote speaker; and

WHEREAS, Girl Scouts of the USA is the world's preeminent organization for young girls and women and boasts a membership of more than 3.6 million; the organization helps its members define and direct their inner drives and encourages them to develop their leadership skills and organization abilities, as well as a lifelong commitment to community service; and

WHEREAS, Richelle Wilkerson is a self-motivated young lady with a great desire to succeed; she is renowned for her strong work ethic, and she strives for excellence in everything she does; and

WHEREAS, Richelle is well-liked and respected by her peers, and provides exceptional leadership in the Girl Scouts; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Ms. Richelle Wilkerson for her praiseworthy service to the state of Tennessee and its citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and congratulate Ms. Richelle Wilkerson upon her receipt of the Girl Scout Gold Award, and extend to her our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.